

*Coolabah, No.18, 2016, ISSN 1988-5946, Observatori: Centre d'Estudis Australians /
Australian Studies Centre, Universitat de Barcelona*

Spanish Zombie Films: The Cases of Amando de Ossorio and Jorge Grau

Alex del Olmo Ramón
ESUP-Universitat Pompeu Fabra
aolmo@tecnocampus.cat

Copyright©2016 Alex del Olmo Ramón. This text may be archived and redistributed both in electronic form and in hard copy, provided that the author and journal are properly cited and no fee is charged.

Abstract: Situated by many scholars in the lowest position of cinema monsters, the zombie has over recent years been erected into one of the main benchmarks of the current fantasy genre. From its roots located in the lush jungles of Haiti until its arrival in the West, the figure of the zombie as embodied by the living dead has a unique place in 20th-century popular culture, especially at the beginning of the 21st century. This article discusses the unique phenomenon of Spanish *fantastique* cinema during Franco's dictatorship. Its historical overview explains the causes that have led to the emergence of the Spanish *fantastique* film genre, taking as example the film production of two of its most emblematic Spanish film directors working in the zombie subgenre: Amando de Ossorio and Jorge Grau. This article investigates the complex relationship between *fantastique* films and history, based on the study of the zombie films of these two directors throughout a troubled period, with its accompanying interpretation of the evolution of the subgenre and its impact on society.

Keywords: Spanish zombie films, Amando de Ossorio, Jorge Grau, *fantastique*.

"Zombies Are the New Vampires" was the eye-catching headline of an article published in 2009 in TIME magazine that concluded with the following thoughts: "Down with vampires. Long live (or is it die?) the zombie: the official monster of the recession." And it is indeed true, for the zombie is currently enjoying a golden age that dates back to the time George A. Romero brought them out for a stroll in 1968 with his post-modern reinterpretation of the classic film *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), thus announcing American Gothic to the world.

Since then, the cinema's living dead have been travelling a tortuous path with their crude gait and eternal death rattles, a path that has shifted until it has been relegated to the limits of marginal culture. Commenting on this, Russell states:

Given the lowly status of its monstrous stars, it is not surprising that the zombie movie has remained on the cultural margins. Rejected by the Academy –scholarly studies of horror movies generally prefer to discuss vampires, werewolves and even serial killers before the living dead – these films have been consigned to the graveyard of popular culture, and the zombie itself has become *persona non grata* with everyone except those horror fans who like their movies raw and bloody [...] the living dead are always found lurking in movies that are low on stars, short on cash and often hurried into the cinematic equivalent of a shotgun wedding. (Russell, 7)

Perceptions have fortunately changed in recent years. Critics and filmmakers from both Spain and abroad have returned to the zombie in films that are far removed from the amateur-like productions that involved more eagerness than resources and have extolled the zombie as an element of pop culture reference. Considering the moment in which we find ourselves, with the major box office success of films such as *REC* (Balaguero and Plaza, 2007) and other subsequent sequels, it is fair to take a retrospective look at and analyse the Spanish zombie cinema.

For just as we can speak of American or Italian zombie films, so too Spain has its own iconography and production that allows us to speak of Spanish zombie films. Not only was its production carried out by Spanish directors, it also combined visual elements from other horror genres such as vampires, religion—with the Knights Templars—alongside other elements of Spanish folklore and folk tales such as Gustavo Adolfo Becquer's legends or stories about revenants appearing at night to terrorise the living.

If we were to trace the beginning of this film genre we would have to travel back to the 1970s, during the final stages of the Franco dictatorship. Then Spanish fantasy films, and hence the zombie subgenre, gave birth to two of its key figures, the writer –director from La Coruña in Spain Amando de Ossorio, and the catalan director Jorge Grau, who earned their reputation as cult directors in films about the undead in our country and partly abroad (Germany, Italy and Japan are just three examples). Nonetheless, they have often been forgotten by the critics or, in the best of cases, ostracised to exist in the shadows of other more widely known directors by the general public.

Amando de Ossorio, filmed his tetralogy on the Knights Templar, which began in 1971 with *Tombs of the Blind Dead* and, Jorge Grau, a director from Barcelona was responsible for *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* (1974), considered to be the best sequel of its predecessor, *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968). Both have to be considered true auteurs, in this film subgenre and above that of a number of directors such as León Klimovsky (*Vengeance of the Zombies*, 1972), Carlos Aured (*Horror Rises from the Tomb*, 1972), and one of the icons of Spanish horror films Jesús Franco, or Paul Naschy (aka Jacinto Molina Álvarez).

All of them, enjoying relative success, were dedicated to working in the genre of the living dead on the coat tails of Ossorio and Grau, with the former's films a breath of fresh air, as noted by Russell, helping to dignify and create a body of work of this interesting subgenre of Spanish horror beyond our borders.

The main reason that Spanish fantasy/horror films—and, therefore, Spanish zombie

films—did not appear until the 1960s-70s was the repression that was still being meted out by the Church, Catholic power and the harsh dictatorship imposed by General Franco. Both the Church and Franco exercised tight state control, nipping in the bud and quelling any artistic expression associated with this genre. It is no wonder then that the main body of Spanish horror films – and, therefore, zombie films – appears when the fantasy genre had already developed all its facets and even exhausted its cycles throughout most of the world.

German expressionism, Universal's monster films and science fiction films from the 1950s had all passed away and Hammer films, producing pastiches that combined martial arts, vampires and the living dead, such as *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974), reflected the decline of an outdated genre in search of other formulas that would eventually convert it into a great example of post-modern cinema, denoting the end of a type of film that had seen better days. According to Javier Memba:

Having lost its way, market rules took precedence over those of fantasy films. Among this confusion, vampirism is mixed with martial arts, which were all the rage in the 1970s. *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* [...] is more appreciated by fans of karate films than lovers of good horror. (Memba, 105)

By contrast, Spanish fantasy films began to emerge in the 1960s for various reasons, one of which was the announcement of Spain's New Standards for Film Development in 1964 (*Nuevas Normas para el Desarrollo de la Cinematografía*). This would end up encouraging co-productions and, consequently, the international growth of Spanish cinema.

The other reason was undoubtedly the economic crisis that threatened the future of filmmaking in the country in 1969 as a result of the so-called "Matesa case", in which the government was obliged to intervene against Banco de Crédito Industrial, a local bank involved in a political corruption case, by blocking its activities while awaiting a solution to the problem. This meant that all credit from the bank remained frozen, including loans providing funding to Spanish cinema. The film protection fund relied on this bank and yet payment of subsidies on box office control were frozen year after year, resulting in the subsequent desperation of producers.

Consequently, horror films had two trump cards to play when it came to attracting the interest of Spanish producers. They were a safe investment, because they offered immediate profitability due to low production costs, and they were also easier to export, because of their co-production status. Thanks to these two characteristics, as well as two box office successes that would mark the turning point of the fantasy genre in Spain, *The House That Screamed* (Narciso Ibáñez Serrador, 1969) and *The Werewolf Versus the Vampire Woman* (León Klimovsky, 1971, featuring a character who was similar to the Templars, whom Ossorio would represent a year later in the first film of his tetralogy), Spain entered fully into the emergence of the fantasy genre. This reached its peak between 1969 and 1973 with the shooting of almost a hundred films in the genre in just over three years. This is an extremely high figure if one takes into account that the total number of Spanish films in this genre is approximately three hundred during the 60s until the end of the 70s. This increase in just three years shows the importance and scope of these particular years, which also marked the beginning of zombie films,

crystallising in the film by Amando de Ossorio that dealt with this subject for the first time: *Tombs of the Blind Dead* (1971).

In his first film, Ossorio introduced a new type of zombie hitherto unknown in the world: the “blind dead”, evil and terrifying mummified bodies, reanimated Knights Templar seeking out victims while riding on their cadaverous steeds, guided only by sound and drinking human blood to sustain their cursed existence.

This was a new, purely Iberian legendary figure that departed from classic vampires or werewolves, which were already known to the general public, and would be exploited by its director on four occasions:

1. *Tombs of the Blind Dead* (1971), which was equally influenced by EC Comics, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's legends of the Knights Templar, Romero's zombies, Satanism and vampirism.
2. *Return of the Evil Dead* (1973), with its veiled parody of politicians at the time.
3. *Horror of the Zombies* (1974), to which Ossorio added the myth of the Flying Dutchman.
4. *Night of the Death Cult* (1975), with its references to the stories of H. P. Lovecraft, abominable beings emerging from the depths of the sea.

A fifth instalment was left in the pipeline. If filmed it would have been titled *The Necronomicon of the Templars* and would have cited two of the three legendary figures of Iberian horror: Ossorio's mummified, zombie Templars and the werewolf named Waldemar Daninsky, played by Paul Naschy, omitting the abominable Dr Orloff created by Jesús Franco, the third legendary figure of Spanish horror film.

Ossorio explained it as follows in an interview with Josu Olano and Borja Crespo:

[The production company] Profilmes thought that since Ossorio and Naschy were providing the money, why not a movie directed by Amando de Ossorio featuring the Templars and the wolfman together? But it was impossible, because Naschy was then beginning his career as director of his own projects and wasn't very interested. (Aguilar, 356)

Ultimately the film series of the Templars did, however, make a brief comeback in *The Devil's Cross* (John Gilling, 1974).

It is no coincidence that Ossorio's most important work came after 1971. As Benedeti et al correctly point out:

In July 1971, Ossorio was moved from Radio Nacional to NO-DO, where he was much more qualified. This move gave him much more free time to shoot his own films, and it was precisely during this period that he produced most of his higher quality work. (Benedeti, 11)

Restrictions were always placed on Ossorio's natural talent. Given that he was a man with truly original ideas for his time, he was already encountering problems on his first film in the Templars' film series. Before he could bring them to life on film, he produced a series of paintings and masks in an attempt to convince the producers and prove to them the terrifying look they could have on the screen. Having overcome his first hurdle, he was subsequently not able to shoot in his native Galicia, as he had originally planned. The following was the reply he received when indicating his desire/wish to shoot the film in Spain:

They told me that if I made a film with the dead rising from the grave at night and all that, in an area that was at the time being promoted by Fraga to attract tourism, they may have to ban it [...] and since it all sounded rather fishy to me, I went off and shot it in Portugal. (Aguilar, 356)

And this indeed was how it occurred. Five years earlier, Spain had already witnessed a plane crash in the Andalusian village of Palomares in 1966, in which a American B-52 collided with a KC-135 refuelling aircraft, dropping four 1.5 megaton thermonuclear bombs, two of which crashed to the ground close to the town, triggering their conventional detonator but without producing a nuclear explosion. Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Spain's Minister of Information and Tourism at the time, went swimming on the beach at Quitapellejos in Palomares in a campaign to reassure the public about radioactivity levels in the area. Under these circumstances and still with the fear of the "nuclear demon", it was unlikely that the Spanish government would have allowed a film to be made about the living dead arising from their graves in northern Spain, with the collective memory of the Almería radioactive incident still very much alive.

With the road clear shooting in Portugal, problems continued to hound Ossorio. The reason was the emblem that the spectres bore on their chest in his films. Initially, the emblems were very similar to the Cross of the Templar Order of Calatrava (the first military order founded in Castilla). Ossorio, frightened by the idea of possibly having to remove all the shots of the zombie knights because of the censors he replaced the original Templars' cross with an Egyptian cross symbolising eternal life.

Regarding the legend of the Knights Templar, it has to be said that despite the tradition and conceptual charge of the story being handled by Ossorio who referred it back to the Iberian Peninsula, their origins in fact date back to Brittany in France. It was there that terrible stories were told of shroud covered skeletons riding on the bones of steeds chasing travellers or trapping young maidens, with the souls of the spectral riders damned for eternity.

While Ossorio's Templars are the product of the Galician director's imagination, one cannot forget the influence of some of the works of the Sevillian poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer in the tetralogy. In particular, two of his most famous *Legends: The Mount of the Souls* and *The Miserere*. Ossorio's film is adorned by a soundtrack by Antón García Abril, who did a brilliant job with limited resources, repeatedly recording the name of the production manager on the film *Tombs of the Blind Dead* (1971), Pérez Giner, and then running the tape backwards to create a sound treatment with the addition of a chorus made up of only two people.

Another key element to highlight in Ossorio's work is his obsession with sex (soft-core because of his time). He himself stated in an interview about his fascination with the combination of love and death, Eros and Thanatos, beauty and the beast:

I've always liked playing with the contrast of mixing the sexual with that of life beyond the grave [...] I don't know if it's effective in terms of the general public, but to me it's fascinating. (Aguilar, 359)

It should be noted that European horror films in the 1970s were greatly affected by the porn industry boom during that decade. As soon as porn films such as *Deep Throat* (1972) and *Emmanuelle* (1974) were released, the horror genre underwent a major transformation that blurred the line between horror and pornography. An example of this influence can be seen in French fantasy films, also known as the *fantastique*. The *fantastique* is dominated by sex, as defined by the horror film critics Cathal Tohill and Pete Tombs:

[In the *fantastique*] linear narrative and logic are always ignored [and] the pictorial, the excessive are the privileged factors [...] With logic and rationality out of the way, the repressed takes centre stage, and it is hardly surprising that the other guiding factor inside the *fantastique* film is a predilection towards the erotic. (Russell, 88)

The *Blind Dead* series attracted two types of very different generations of audiences. The first were hardline fascists and the second were young people who just wanted to have fun at the cinema. As Nigel J. Burrell noted, *Tombs of the Blind Dead* can be read as an analogy of "the rising up of Old Spain against the permissive generation, the repressive fascism of the Franco regime versus the youth of the day" (Burrell, 5)

Burrell's theory proved correct, given that barely a few years later, once Franco's dictatorship and repressive controls had disappeared, filmmakers and Spanish youth gradually became interested in a much lighter, more permissive type of cinema –known locally as the *El Destape* movement– in which actresses started appearing completely nude in films, and to a lesser extent actors, alongside Spanish comedians, thus superseding the previous cinema productions approved by Franco's censors.

Nonetheless, Amando de Ossorio was always modest about his contribution to the zombie genre: "I had no intention of innovating the genre. I simply wanted to do something a little different," he explained in interviews in 2001 (Hodges, 19)

But the reality was a far cry from the director's viewpoint. Although perhaps unintentionally, the fact of the matter is that Ossorio's zombies are the most original recreation of the iconic undead in 1970s Spain. They avoided recycling the monster movies at Universal from the 1930s and 1940s or the Hammer films from the 1950s and 1960s by Naschy, or even the experimental films that lie halfway between hardcore pornography and hardgore horror by Jesús Franco.

Amando de Ossorio undoubtedly helped Spanish cinema reconcile itself with its time, escaping the morals of Franco's censors and avoiding Naschy's far from terrifying films, thus creating his own world within the zombie genre as a recognised auteur. We can see his influence in films such as *The Devil's Cross* (John Gilling, 1975), *The*

Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires (Roy Ward Baker, 1974), *Further Than Fear* (Tomás Aznar, 1979), *Death Ship* (Alvin Rakoff, 1980), *Burial Ground* (Andrea Bianchi, 1980), *Mansion of the Living Dead* (Jesús Franco, 1985) or even the recent film series of *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001) and, *The Fog* (John Carpenter, 1980).

Ossorio was misunderstood during his time. Even though he lived under the difficulty of a dictatorship, producing low-budget films, in a Spain without much imagination or many stars, Ossorio almost managed to work with Boris Karloff in *Malenka, the Niece of the Vampire* (1969). The producers vetoed the actor's participation in the film as they were not willing to transfer all American rights to him, given that he had been one of the stars of Universal's horror films 30 years ago. Nonetheless, the film was produced thanks to the interest of the actress who played the role of Malenka, Anita Ekberg, and Ossorio ended up directing her in Spain. She was the star who symbolised one of Europe's legendary erotic moments, after she had filmed the famous sequence in the Trevi Fountain together with Marcello Mastroianni in *La Dolce Vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960).

Tired of battling with producers, disappointed to see how his scripts repeatedly ended up being a shadow of what he had originally imagined, and in frail health in his later years, a still lucid Ossorio lamented: "I never left cinema, cinema left me." But let us not leave him, and instead place his zombie film work where it deserves to be. For to do him justice it is obligatory to claim that his *Blind Dead* tetralogy is one of the best film series in the living dead genre and fantasy films in general in the Spanish film industry, and that the figure of Amando de Ossorio was one of Europe's and Spain's cult directors during the 1970s working in the zombie film subgenre.

Jorge Grau, a native of Barcelona, embodies one of those rare cases in Spanish cinema in the 1970s, combining auteurship, training, sensibility and craftsmanship. These characteristics were not lost on the critics at the time and allowed him to shoot *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* (1974). It is undoubtedly one of the most important – and most unfairly forgotten – films in the history of Spanish horror films. Despite its clear mission to copy and look like Romero's original film, Grau never hid this fact. He even claimed: "To make the film I analysed *The Night of the Living Dead* frame by frame in order to work out how it was made" (Herranz, 311).

And it was precisely Grau's reliability as a director that made the film much more than a pale copy of the original. In fact, foreign critics list it as being the best successor of Romero's founding film. Reviewing Grau's film *Code of Hunting* (1983), the film critic José Luís Guarner described the Catalan director as follows:

Grau is a model of tenacity. He displays a very rare quality in Spanish cinema: like almost all responsible professionals, he attempts to salvage even the most dubious projects, not only putting his filmmaking skills on the line – which are many – but also seeking to bring them as closely as possible to his own personal feelings, even including autobiographical elements. I, for one, certainly doubt that there is another filmmaker in the world who is as emotionally engaged in their films to such an extent, so intensely and with such sincerity. (Aguilar, 91)

He studied at Barcelona's Institute of Theatre, one of Spain's most prestigious acting training centres, and began his career as an actor, set designer and director of actors until a friend offered him the chance to direct an amateur short film, *El don del mar* (1957). After this experience, Grau decided to further his education at Rome's Centro Sperimentale. On his return to Spain, his filmmaking career proper began. Among other films, he worked as an assistant director on *The Colossus of Rhodes* (Sergio Leone, 1961) or as second unit director on *Goliath Against the Giants* (Guido Malatesta and Gianfranco Parolini, 1962). That same year he displayed his strong theoretical background for the publishers Rialp by writing the first book of his career: *El actor y el cine* (1962), in which he analyses the different methods of interpretation and acting techniques from the Stanislavsky method to the Italian neorealism of Roberto Rossellini, or the foundations of a good performance based on gesture, voice, sensitivity and being photogenic, from which he would later claim: "The people whose faces don't look good when photographed is not a result of their physical features, but their state of mind" (Grau, 116)

His outstanding direction of actors is one of the most striking features of his career, of which he himself looked for the rationale by stating: "I try to provide the secondary character in my films with a story that is either told or untold, or even hinted at. What I don't like is that they are simply pawns in a game" (Herranz, 39)

This undoubtedly distances the director away from most Spanish horror productions of the time. Moreover, Grau is the undisputed architect of a social realist style that was first seen in *Noche de verano* (1962), developed in *El espontáneo* (1964) and culminated in *Una historia de amor* (1966). As Jordi Batlle states:

Three titles that provide a breath of fresh air to our national cinema, the last of which was also eligible to be part of such a decisive movement as the School of Barcelona. Looked at in this way, Grau would be much closer to Arthur Penn than George A. Romero [...] *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* (1974) closer to Miguel Picazo or Basilio Martín Patino than Carlos Aured, Enrique Eguiluz, León Klimovsky or Amando de Ossorio. (Aguilar, 92)

Horror films play a vital role in that eclectic landscape that constitutes his filmography, in which "auteur" and "craftsman" go hand in hand and sometimes intermingle. His first attempt at this genre was conceived at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival in Czechoslovakia when he first discovered the story of Countess Bathory, who eventually appeared in the film *The Legend of Blood Castle* (1973), a complex and unique approach to the legendary figure of Countess Bathory, who bathed in the blood of virgins to preserve her youth. Grau wanted to shoot the story not as a horror film, but as something more human. But he was not able to do so because of the social climate that prevailed immediately before the death of General Franco.

Grau himself expressed it this way in an interview with Pablo Herranz:

What they wanted was anti-Franco films that were in some way committed to the reality of the moment. I had always worked like this as a filmmaker committed to reality, but not to political reality [...] I wasn't able to make the film until horror films became fashionable. So it was suggested that I rework it as a horror film. For me this meant surrendering some of the

film's tone to turn it into something different, but since there was a spectacular and exhilarating look about it, I accepted. (Herranz, 39)

A circumstance that could be extended to other Spanish directors, as Ossorio also expressed a similar tone of regret to that of Grau:

I wanted to make a more poetic art cinema, working on the cinematography, making it more glamorous, but I had to hold back. It wasn't the right time. (Aguilar, 351)

This commitment to the reality of the moment became the leitmotif that could be found in his masterpiece *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* (1974). It is not surprising, given that May 68 had burst onto the scene in France and the hippies had established themselves as a mass youth movement at the end of the 1960s in the USA. Grau, committed to the events of his time, added an ecological touch to the film (an agricultural machine causes the zombies to appear). The ultrasound it produces drives insects crazy, causing them to devour each other by affecting their underdeveloped central nervous system, thus making the newly dead, whose nervous system still remains somewhat intact, rise from their eternal sleep. A different type of social criticism underlies Romero's film. Russell defends it thus:

With its insistent ecological message ("We've been poisoned by progress that is unconcerned about its consequences," explained Grau when he was asked about the political message of his film) and its cynical representation of the authorities as stupid, ineffective and ultrareactionary, *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* clearly owes a considerable debt to Romero. It is still a captivating film in its own right, offering an unforgettable and desolate vision of entropy and decay. (Russell, 46)

This ecological viewpoint was not the only change that could be seen in the film. The fact that Grau's film is considered to be one of the subgenre's most influential is no coincidence. It was one of the first films in the 1970s in which innocent animals were transformed into terrible threats by man's direct or indirect action—whether it was by radiation, chemical spills, animal experiments or simply aberrations of nature. This situation as an excuse for the plot was something certainly new at the time.

Another extremely important element in the film was its use of colour, which combined with the makeup effects of Giannetto de Rossi, who would later work under Lucio Fulci to create the makeup for *Zombie 2* (1979), represent an important innovation compared to Romero's very low-budget film, and at the same time anticipate the openly graphic and bloody tone that films about the living dead would adopt from *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), Romero's second foray into the subgenre, hugely popular in Europe after the rapid release of the film's (false) sequel, *Zombie 2: The Dead Area Among Us* (Lucio Fulci, 1979). Therefore, Grau's film is ahead of its time in terms of the highly famous gore effects that would become an indispensable element of any zombie film worth its salt after Romero's second film in his series, especially in Italian zombie films. The physical appearance of the living dead, with their bloodshot eyes, gaunt face and sleepwalker yet unstoppable gait, provides the film with a touch of realism never before seen in any similar movie, not even in one of the first colour productions about the zombie legend: *The Plague of the Zombies* (John Gilling, 1966). It achieves a surreal

and disturbing atmosphere of undeniable suggestive power, enhanced throughout by Francisco Sempere's excellent cinematography, with its muted tones and eerie light.

Not surprisingly Grau speaks of the treatment of colour in his film and the studies he made before portraying the undead in his film:

Another thing that we came up with was giving the dead the look they had when they died. And this also came about from a study I did based on a large book about forensic photography. [...] in which the corpses appeared before the autopsies were performed. Tragic and dramatic accident victims [...] amazing stuff, and of course the common feature throughout was that the corpse prepared for an autopsy had the look of the moment when the person had died, so a person who had hanged himself had a blood red neck. [...] so Fernando Gil's character, who had drowned, was always wet, and before shooting any shot, before rolling the film, a bucket of water was thrown over him. His clothes were soaked and water was always dripping from his face throughout the entire movie. (del Olmo, 260)

This was a truly new technique at the time. Especially given that Grau's film, halfway between Romero's black-and-white film and his second foray into the genre four years after *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*, was the first to create for spectators a modern, full-colour imaginary zombie, which had not been represented in that way until then.

Sound is the final expressive resource that needs to be highlighted in Grau's film as it is of such vital importance. It was the first horror film to be shot in stereo. The sound editing itself took Grau almost two months to complete, because according to the director himself "not even one sound is accidental" in his films. This led him to shoot with live sound, but only as a reference soundtrack. The film was subsequently dubbed, because Grau thought it essential to use a musical concept that would serve as a leitmotif throughout the film's entire soundtrack. The concept was marked by Grau's experience of his father passing away:

What could a dead man's voice sound like? I remember when my father died; he was lying in bed with two or three pillows behind him so that he was almost seated. We realised that he had stopped breathing, so we laid him out. During the movement from sitting to lying he made the noise: "ahhhhhh...", and this was the beginning of the sounds of the living dead in the film. And from this sound came the music. [...] Many of the sound effects in the film's music are me blowing into a microphone and these sounds were then distorted from the mixing desk to give them more resonance. And that's how we did the music. My voice is in the music, as well as the sound of very softly distorted frequency to create this atmosphere. I remember feeling pleased about having done something you feel satisfied with. (del Olmo, 259)

This analogous sound for the zombies' voices, with that of his father's death rattle, is diametrically opposed to the way Romero uses sound in his film. Romero opts for guttural sounds, grunts and silent screams, in clear reference to one of the archetypal figures of horror films, who was also resurrected and made up of corpses: the Frankenstein monster in Universal's monster movies. Conversely, Grau delves deeper

into the physiological study of the dead and the characteristics of corpses, thus making them less histrionic and achieving a much more frightening, expressive and realistic tone than his predecessor.

Grau regained narrative momentum by creating a film that surpassed Romero's original in many aspects. He created trends that the subgenre would later acquire as its own and are now inseparable from the figure of the modern zombie, influencing directors such as Jean Rollin in *The Grapes of Death* (1978), Lucio Fulci in *Zombie 2: The Dead Area Among Us* (1979), Danny Boyle in *28 Days Later* (2002) and Juan Carlos Fresnadillo in its sequel, *28 Weeks Later* (2007), or even Romero himself with his sequel *Dawn of the Dead* (1978).

Jorge Grau was also not a prophet in his own land/country when he premiered his film (as occurred with Amando de Ossorio), but it seems that only recently is he beginning to enjoy deserved recognition for his not only European but also international horror film masterpiece, reaping the benefits that were denied to Ossorio. An example of this is the catalogue of such varied titles given to the film throughout the world: *Don't Open the Window*, *Fin de semana para los muertos*, *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*, *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue*, *Non si deve profanar il sonno dil morti...*

Spain in the 1970s became the world's greatest exponent in the subgenre of zombie films. David Flint also attests to this when he writes:

While Britain and the rest of Europe carried on making films about Dracula, Frankenstein, ghosts and deranged killers during the early Seventies, Spanish filmmakers gave the Euro-zombie a new lease of life. Some of their films were pretty poor, but a few pointed the way for Euro horror in general – and the zombie in particular. (Flint, 104)

Thanks to two directors such as Amando de Ossorio and Jorge Grau, whose paths coincided briefly a body of cinematographic work in this subgenre was created, although the concepts they based them on and their manner of working were diametrically opposed. Their work not only produced a new truly original iconography that was groundbreaking and a breath of fresh air for the time, it also continued Romero's series by bringing a new vision that surpassed it. Both approaches filtered down and influenced countless films and directors who followed in the wake of Amando de Ossorio and Jorge Grau and became true masters of this subgenre.

Once Romero's film had been released, English films ignored zombies, Italian films failed to adopt them as an archetype of horror until the arrival of Lucio Fulci in the late 1970s, and the USA itself had to wait another eight years before it would see the second foray of George A. Romero.

Spain, and its relatively competent series of directors, was the only country that carried on in this subgenre by constructing a stylistic and thematic bridge between the zombies of Romero's first film and the truly bloody zombies of Lucio Fulci, Umberto Lenzi, Marino Girolami, Andrea Bianchi or Michele Soavi who would come to dominate the 1980s.

Works cited

- Aguilar, C. coord. *Cine fantástico y de terror español: 1900-1983*. Don Ostia [San Sebastián]: Semana de Cine Fantástico y de Terror de San Sebastián, 2004.
- Balagueró, J. P. REC. DVD. Barcelona: Filmax, 2007.
- Benedeti, I. et al. *Amando de Ossorio: Un galego fantástico*. A Coruña, Galicia: Universidade da Coruña. Servicio de extensión universitaria, 1999.
- Burrell, N. *Knights of the terror*. Inglaterra: Midnight Media Publishing, 2005.
- Del Olmo, A. *El eterno retorno del no-muerto como arquetipo fílmico: Una aproximación a la figura del zombi en la cultura popular contemporánea*. Barcelona: Facultat de Ciències de la Comunicació Blanquerna, 2012.
- Flint, D. *Zombie holocaust: How the living dead devoured the pop culture*. London: Plexus, 2009.
- Grau, J. *El actor y el cine*. Madrid: Rialp, 1962.
- Grossman, Lev. *Zombies are the new vampires*. Amsterdam: Time Warner Publishing. Vol. 173: 16, April 2009: 47.
- Herranz, P. "Jorge Grau: A vueltas con los muertos". Quatermass. Vol. (2002), num 4-5: 38-43.
- Hodges, M. *Amando de Ossorio: Farewell to Spain's Knight of Horror*. [?]: Shivers nº 88, april, 2001.
- Let sleeping corpses lie*. (1974). Dir. Jorge Grau. Star Films, S.A. Divisa Home Video.
- Memba, J. *El cine de terror de la Universal*. 2nd ed. Madrid: T&B Editores, 2006.
- Memba, J. *La Hammer: Su historia, sus películas, sus mitos*. Madrid: T&B Editores, 2007.
- Ossorio, Amando de. *Night of the Seagulls*. (1976) Victory Films Films S.A, Blue Underground Inc.
- *Return of the Evil Dead*. (1973). Atlas International Film, Blue Underground Inc.
- . *The Ghost Galleon*. (1975) Amando de Ossorio. Video Mercury Films S.A, Blue Underground Inc.
- Ossorio, Amando de. (dir.) *Tombs of the Blind Dead*. (1971). Atlas International Film, Blue Underground Inc.
- Russell, J. *Book of the Dead*. 3rd ed. UK: FAB Press, 2007.

Alex del Olmo has a degree in Audiovisual Communication by the Universitat Ramon Llull, an MA in Documentary by the UAB (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), an MA in Film and Television Fiction Production, Script Writing and Directing by the Universitat Ramon Llull, and a PhD in Horror Cinema. His research focuses on horror cinema and postmodernism. He has published several articles on these topics and he is currently Senior Lecturer at ESUP-Universitat Pompeu Fabra at the Tecnocampus, teaching Camera Techniques and TV Postproduction in the Audiovisual Media Degree.